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### **Aesthetics of Indigenous Faith Tourism in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

Religious Tourism (also known as faith tourism) is an area of development in Nigeria that is fast growing. However, this growth is confined mainly to Christian religious activities. Indigenous faith tourism has been largely unexplored and unexploited. Most times indigenous faith activities are regarded only in entertainment terms, deriving their value only from the leisure perspective. It is in the light of the foregoing that this paper examines the area as a means of national development.

The paper makes a case for the development of a robust aesthetics for the sector with focus on the role of the mass media in this regard. It is contended that the mass media have not done much to foster indigenous faith tourism development, owing to some challenges. The paper then

concludes by offering ways of tackling these challenges, for better media performance and appreciation of the arts involved in indigenous faith tourism.

Key words: Tourism, Indigenous faith, Mass Media

## **AESTHETICS OF INDIGENOUS FAITH TOURISM IN NIGERIA**

### **Introduction**

Tourism has fast become one of the relevant areas in the discussion of national development. The attention generated by tourism is rooted in the culture, artifacts and unique places in a particular country. It is the uniqueness of such cultural practices and places that imbues them with tourism potentials, as bearers of intrinsic and endogenous aesthetic values.

The most significant elements of tourism are places, as well as events, which are mostly of historical or archaeological significance. These are often valued as bearers of notions of aesthetic ideas of communities, epochs and civilizations, given the manner in which they document and codify the intellectual cultures of such communities in the form of material and nonmaterial representations. In the context of Nigeria and Africa, it is however sad to note that many of these festivals and places of cultural significance have been rendered irrelevant as a result of westernization, which has supplanted many practices having religious or cultural significance. In many instances, there has been deliberate destruction of the historical and cultural elements of the traditions of many African societies. Thus, despite many years of independence, the effects of socio-cultural and religious colonialization of Nigeria and Africa continue to reverberate all over the cultural fabric of virtually every African traditional society.

Many cultural traditions, events and practices that possess tourism potentials given their rich aesthetics have become denigrated and relegated to a state of insignificance. Such practices have continued to be regarded only in frivolous terms. This is what Bewaji has aptly described as epistemicide; a condition in which the intellectual traditions of colonized peoples are deliberately destroyed, denied or subjugated, to the point of non-existence (Bewaji, 2012). Such, for example,

is the state of the Igue festival in Benin City (Edo State), during which the traditional ruler (the Oba) is not expected to receive visitors. During the festival, the Oba goes into spiritual retreat and prays for progress in the kingdom in the coming year. He was, thus, not expected to receive visitors in order to be in a perfect state needed to enable him convey the problems of the kingdom to the ancestors for solution.

It was the refusal of the British emissary to respect this traditional convention that led to the invasion of the Benin kingdom in 1897, culminating in the banishment of the then Oba (Ovonramwen) to Calabar. Though the festival continues to hold annually, it does not attract enough tourists despite its historical and cultural significance, simply because the values which imbue the festival with authenticity and meaning have been negated by the powers of colonization. Such an event should be of academic interest to scholars of Benin and British history, who should be guests of the city during the festival, usually celebrated in December. The dwindling significance of places and events having tourism potentials can be noted in indigenous faiths, with the consequences for the indigenous identity strictures of the domestic populations. The African continent is replete with different religious beliefs which give meaning to the lives of the peoples of the various communities in which these religions are practiced. The way the people practice these different religions has significant tourism potentials that can be exploited for national benefit, not just as curiosities but as the avenues for the presentation of the values of the communities. Unfortunately, because even the indigenous peoples whose ways of appreciating themselves and their practices have been denigrated have abandoned these beliefs and practices, this is an area of the Nigerian indigenous religious aesthetics that has not really attracted tourism, compared to other tourist attractions such as ecological sites, monuments and (now) carnivals which are merely for

entertainment purposes. Except for the instances of Osun Osogbo and a few others, which were brought into global consciousness because of the agency of the curators of the grove, there is very little in the indigenous religious values and practices which attract the kinds of attention which is devoted to the invading religious traditions of Christianity and Islam, which often receive state funding for believers to observe religious tourism in Israel and Saudi Arabia.

It is in the light of the above scenario that this paper dwells on the need first, to underscore the neglect of the material and immaterial cultures of African peoples as inscribed in their religious traditions, and then emphasize the need to enhance indigenous faith tourism in Nigeria as one of the areas of national development, which has the potential to be an important foreign exchange earner and as a way of understanding and propagating the values of Nigerian communities. In pursuance of this quest, the paper first presents a brief concept of tourism, then it discusses faith tourism as an integral part in the appreciation of the aesthetics of communities where these traditions are embraced. The role of the mass media and the challenges facing the media are equally focused upon. The paper concludes by addressing the challenges which epistemicide has foisted on indigenous cultures and how to consciously transcend same, before finally recommending ways for better media representation of these ideas and enriching their own performance in this regard.

### **Tourism**

Tourism relates to movement of a person or group of people to a particular place of interest. The Northern Arizona University Parks and Management regards tourism as a collection of activities, services and industries that deliver a travel experience including transportation, accommodation, eating and drinking establishments, retail shops, entertainment business, activity

facilities and other hospitality services provided for individuals or groups traveling away from home (Banakan, 2015).

This definition seems to cover the entire gamut of tourism. Specifically, however, the World Tourism Organization (WTO) conceives of a tourist as,

... any person residing within a country irrespective of nationality, traveling to a place within his country other than his usual place of residence for a period of not less than 24 hours or one night for a purpose other than the exercise of a remunerated activity in the place visited. The motives for such travel may be leisure (recreation, holidays, health, studies, religion, sports) business, family, mission, meeting (1981:89).

Obviously, World Tourism Organization (WTO) sees tourism in terms of the period one who goes on tourism has to stay at the place visited. It also emphasizes that the place must not be the place the person resides. According to Gumel, “the basic feature of tourism is leisure activity, which includes among other things, merry making, festivals, cultural visitations and exchange, traveling for commerce and health” (1988: 6).

All the above concepts have common grounds relating to the purpose of such travels. But the period a tourist may stay at the tourist site is irrelevant. A tourist may conclude his tour in less than twenty-four hours, depending on what is of interest to him. However, there should be a maximum period. This is six months, because to stay beyond six months may make such a tourist a resident.

Flowing from the foregoing, tourism can thus be defined as travelling to places of interest for leisure, business, research and other purposes for a period not exceeding six months. The motives for such travels may be intellectual enrichment, cultural understanding, aesthetic

participation in the traditions of the places visited as well as a means of comprehending the identities of the cultures visited. Ashiegbu and Achinike (2014:130) have given different classifications of tourism. They opine that tourism can be classified based on geography or on objective. Based on geography, they have identified domestic, regional and international tourism (130). Under objective, which they (2009:19) refer to as purpose, Okpoko et al. (2008) mention and discuss five types. These are cultural tourism, nature tourism, sport tourism, business/conference tourism and religious tourism (Okpoko 2008, 14-19).

Nigeria, like other African countries, has a lot of tourism potentials which are still undeveloped. Gumel (1988:6) claims that religious tourism activities were, until colonial period almost an exclusive African tradition. Tourist sites abound in Nigeria. So too are events, because of the many ethnic groups that make up the country with each having its own festivals. These sites and events could be exploited for national benefit. This becomes crucial as the country's economy continues to dwindle, due to its dependence on oil. With the global fall in the price of crude oil, the country now needs other alternatives for its foreign exchange and tourism could be one of such alternatives.

Indeed, one of the areas which potentials have not been fully explored is indigenous faith tourism, otherwise referred to as religious tourism. It is one of the categories of tourism that can be exploited for national development, not just as a means of earning tourism income, but more fundamentally in preserving, propagating and assisting future generations to appreciate the aesthetics of intellectual cultures of these communities. Even more significantly, clear identity preservations and governance values are made possible through the exploration and propagation of the ideas imbued in these religious traditions.

### **Indigenous Faith Tourism**

Indigenous faith tourism falls within religious tourism. Religious tourism, (also known as faith tourism) can be defined as “a type of tourism where people travel individually or in a group for pilgrimage, missionary or leisure (fellowship) purposes” (see [www.pulse.ng/religion](http://www.pulse.ng/religion) news). From the definition, it becomes necessary that a particular religion must be widely accepted or must command a large followership, and equally must have significant sites and events to attract tourists. Such sites and events must have some spiritual significance to the adherents of such religions.

Rojo (2007) gives an example of three religions with such large followerships. According to him, “the three major religions in the world (are) Christianity, Islam and Hinduism with a 33%, 21% and 14% worldwide followers (and) have received the highest proportion of religious tourists<sup>93</sup> in their headquarters” (Gedecho, 2014:42). Two of the religions mentioned are responsible for the colonization of the African continent, and for the hiatus that the African aesthetics identity is slipping into. For this reason, it is important that deliberate effort be made to ensure the resuscitation of these religious traditions and the diverse ways in which they, through aesthetics of being, impact societal wellbeing.

Nigeria has had her little share of religious tourism, but this has not been commensurate with the richness of religious traditions of the country or the tropes of aesthetics such tourism can disclose to the world at large. Umejei has noted that “the growth of religious tourism in Nigeria has been pivoted by Christians, Islam and traditional believers, through various programmes that have become tourism attractions for many, both within and outside Nigeria” (at <https://emekaumejei.wordpress.com>rel>). It must however be noted that it is mostly Christian



revivalist and televangelist activities that attract tourists more than indigenous faiths. Such activities as conducted by Shiloh of the Living Faith Church, as well as crusades by the Synagogue Church of All Nations, led by Prophet T.B. Joshua, have continued to attract dignitaries from abroad. When a building of the synagogue church, housing pilgrims collapsed in August 2014, the casualties of that tragedy included 116 South Africans. This shows that foreign tourist constitute a sizeable number of visitors to these church programmes.

In some cases, however, faith tourism, where it recognizes indigenous traditions at all, has become a celebration of mixed faiths, with adherents of different faiths celebrating together. Such is the Ojude Oba festival, celebrated by the Ijebu people in Ogun State. Umejei notes that “the festival, with roots in Islam takes place on the third day of the Id-el-Kabir, but it is celebrated by all the natives both Christians and Muslims” (at <https://emekaumejei.wordpress.com>>rel). Umejei traces the commencement of this festival to when the first converted Muslims in the kingdom thought it fit to pay homage and thank the Ijebu traditional ruler (Awujale of Ijebuland) for his tolerance in allowing them to practice their religion peacefully (at <https://emekaumejei.wordpress.com>>rel).

The subtext that is not emphasized in the above is clear. Indigenous African religions are tolerant of other faiths, and therefore are not exceptionalist or exclusionist in their understanding of followership of either the Deity or the representative of the Deity. Clearly such a narrative as the above, being a component of the aesthetics of identity of indigenous Yoruba people, deserve to be recognized and celebrated. The yearly observance of this tradition of homage payment will definitely work to show that religions can co-exist and that the spaces within which they co-exist does not have to lead to violence or destruction.

There is also the monastery located at Amangwe village in Awhun town, Udi Local Government Area of Enugu State. According to Ezeani, “the monastery is the first in Nigeria and it attracts various religious pilgrims from various parts of the country” (see [enugustatetourismboard.com>php>u](http://enugustatetourismboard.com>php>u)). Ezeani claims that the monastery has a waterfall known as the Awhun waterfall, which “heals various types of diseases as far as you have faith in God” ([enugustatetourismboard.com>php>u](http://enugustatetourismboard.com>php>u)); of course with such healing powers of the waterfall, the site may not attract only Christians as those afflicted with different ailments who would certainly go there for healing.

Apart from these examples of tourist attractions involving people of different faiths, there are other purely indigenous faiths that should attract foreign and local tourists. But, as has been noted, the events of these indigenous faiths have been reduced to ordinary cultural festivals, deriving their essence mainly from the entertainment they provide. Thus, many tourists visit religious sites or participate in festivals for mere leisure. But the real essence of faith tourism must include spiritual rejuvenation which the aesthetics of the shrines discloses, as could be seen in such activities as Muslim pilgrims’ visit to Mecca during hajj and Christian pilgrims’ trip to Jerusalem. The annual hajj by Muslims to Mecca, for instance, is one of the five pillars of Islam which every Muslim is expected to partake in.

Nigeria has a plethora of indigenous religious sites and different calendars of the different faiths, with important events having profound religious significance. Yet these do not attract the number of tourists commensurate with the importance of such faiths. For example, Umejei cites the “Udju Iwhurie festival, popularly known as Agbassa juju (which) is a colourful display of heritage celebrated by the Agbarha people of Warri in Delta State”

(<https://emekaumejei.wordpress.com>>rel). According to him “the festival has roots in Iwhurie the god of war, reputed for its war prowess” (ibid). Most of the contemporary persons who attend this annual festival, like other festivals nationwide, do not attach any religious or spiritual significance to it. They attend for leisure or curiosity.

However, a popular festival with religious significance is the Osun Osogbo. Part of the festival is associated with the worship of the Osun goddess. But, again, many people who attend the festival regard it as a cultural festival, thereby deemphasizing its religious significance. It is an annual festival that has cultural and spiritual significance to the Yoruba people. The 2015 edition lasted one week and climaxed on Friday, 21<sup>st</sup> August, 2015 (see *Vanguard*, Friday, September 8, 2015: 8). The Osun grove, which is managed by the priestess (Olorisa), has been designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a World Heritage Monument (See *Vanguard*, Friday August 28, 2015:38). This development was celebrated by the traditional ruler of Osogbo city, Ataoja of Osogbo, Oba Jimoh Olanipekun, during the 2015 edition of the festival. Thus, this famous festival now assumes more of cultural significance, connoting leisure, rather than the spiritual status it ought to have, like the annual Christian and Muslim pilgrimage to Israel and Saudi Arabia respectively.

Also Ifá religion has an annual festival which serves as an avenue for spiritual rejuvenation for its adherents. This festival holds at Oke Tase in Ile-Ife (Osun State). A temple which, according to Agboola (2014:18), had been in existence since 1930 stands at Oke Tase. A national council for the religion was constituted in 2002. It is this national council that was responsible for the modernization of the temple in 2014, to celebrate the festival. The 2014 edition held in June and it featured a conference during which papers were presented on culture and religion. The

festival ended with recitations and revelations of the future as well as special prayers. It is therefore a festival with a high spiritual significance, attracting pilgrims from the United States of America and the Caribbean. It is instructive to note that Ifá has adherents in Europe and the Americas (including Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela and Puerto Rico). Its tourism potentials can therefore not be over emphasized, especially when properly managed.

Despite these tourism potentials, indigenous faiths have not assumed their rightful positions regarding tourism in the country. The number of tourists in this regard cannot, in any sense, be compared with the number of people who visit Saudi Arabia and Israel. For instance, “every year, about 2 million Muslims converge at Mecca, the holiest place in Islam for the hajj” (BBC News, 6<sup>th</sup> January 2006). Okonkwo and Nzeh (2009:291) claim that in 2007, the “two holy sites of Makkah and Madinah hosted about 2.4 million pilgrims, (while) about 95,000 pilgrims from Nigeria participated in the 2008 edition.” But the 2014 Ifá Oke Tase festival did not host up to 30,000 people.

There is, therefore, the need for indigenous faiths in Nigeria to harness their tourism potentials in order to attract tourists. Such a step would be of benefit to both the faithfuls in particular, and the nation in general.

### **Religious Tourism, Aesthetics and National Development**

Faith tourism has some implications for national development. Although this is not the main focus of this paper, it is, perhaps important to mention a few implications of religious tourism, necessary for national development. It has already been stated that religious tourism is a means of foreign exchange earnings for the nation, as pilgrims would come in with foreign currency which would enhance the country's economy.

Again religious tourism can serve to create job opportunities for those near the sites of pilgrimage, who may then be employed in various capacities. They may be guides who explain the aesthetic motifs and values to tourists, as well as they may serve as assistants to some pilgrims. By so doing, international understanding, respect and friendship are established, as citizens of other nations come and go with favourable impressions about the country. With this, friendly relations and cultural understanding can be enhanced between peoples and countries. One of the implications of religious tourism in national development is the actual aim of such tourism. Here, the aim could be spiritual rebirth and satisfaction. In fact, Okpoko and Okpoko (2002:23) have affirmed that the main aim of religious tourism is spiritual satisfaction (Ashiegbu and Achinike, 2014:132). Such satisfaction places the pilgrims in such a state of mind needed to contribute to the development of mankind in general and their country in particular.

More importantly, religious tourism can lead to the development of infrastructure needed to accommodate the tourists on a regular basis and for the use and benefit of locals on a continuous basis. This leads to the generation of local investment in religious and historic capacities and building of resources. This may result in the pride of local communities in their heritage. This will lead ultimately to the improvement of the local economy particularly, and that of the nation, in general. It is thus clear that the development of indigenous faith tourism in Nigeria would contribute in no small measure to the country's development.

This last point is significant, because when a society values its spiritual and cultural heritage, this provides an affirmative psychological boost for identity as well as impetus to the ability of the members of society to take pride in their heritage. More importantly, such a venture ensures that acceptance of foreign religions is not at the expense of indigenous traditions, contrary

to the current situation in which African traditional religions are denigrated from all sides as primitive and unworthy of embrace.

### **The Mass Media and Faith Tourism in Nigeria**

For the full potentials of indigenous faith tourism to be realized, there must be a conscious effort to ensure its development. Such effort should not be confined to mere evangelism, which may turn out to be mere propaganda that may produce negative results. Many people do not have adequate information about indigenous faiths in Nigeria. And since the two major foreign religions of Christianity and Islam have gained so much space, traditional religions become relegated to the back seat and scorned. One can then see the role of mass media in the propagation and dissemination of information about indigenous religions of Africa, so that members of the wider society can understand the foundations upon which they are built, and their potential benefit to contemporary society.

The mass media must, therefore, be utilized for the development of the potentials of indigenous faith tourism in Nigeria. And the first task for the media, in this regard, is the provision of information on the relevant indigenous faiths. It should be noted that our mass media space has been colonized by the foreign religions, especially, Christianity, which has several television stations and programmes in the major networks as well as on radio. Also, the major national newspapers devote weekly columns for the propagation of Islam and Christianity. But there is no such space available for any of the traditional religions. The mass media should, therefore, seek and disseminate relevant information about traditional religions in the country. This is for the purpose of making some of them that are nationally spread in practice to have national status and acceptability.

The media must thus expand their space to accommodate traditional religions. The information about such indigenous faiths should be conveyed in a way that should serve the interest of improving their tourism potentials. This is because, as Ibagere (2002:62) notes, “it is the way a message is communicated that determines, to a great extent, the degree of appropriateness and, by implication, the success of the communication activity.” A good packaging of the information would serve to establish a proper media space allocation and management which would result in a system acceptable to all. This point is corroborated by Hoggart (1970:150), who notes that “in a society of clearly marked lines of class distinctions, mass communications style ... is the creation of an imaginary, yet real world acceptable to all.” There should, thus, be a kind of democratization of the media space. This point is well noted by Nwanne, who examines such democratization from the perspective of conflict.

According to him, the mass media “must make their space and airtime available to all those involved in a conflict to ventilate their news” (2009:23). It is therefore imperative for indigenous faiths to seek out their spaces and utilize same effectively to realize their tourism potentials. When there is this synergy between the media and these indigenous faiths, the adherents of these faiths would know how to utilize the media to their own spiritual benefit. But as it appears currently, this synergy is lacking. Thus it seems the media are hostile to indigenous faiths. Yet it is only when the media relate to these faiths that the adherents would “see the media as being friendly and sympathetic to their plight” (Ibagere, 2011:211).

It is clear then that it is virtually impossible to learn and understand any indigenous faith in Nigeria through the mass media, because there is no space for them in the media. But converts continue to be won to Christianity and Islam through the media. Converts are won to indigenous

faiths mostly through very tortuous routes. This can only result after economic and social problems have been spiritually solved for such people or when they get cured of some life threatening ailments. Such converts would then be made to go through tasking initiation processes which can be tourist attractions, but are never seen in the media.

In disseminating information about indigenous faiths, the focus should be on those aspects that should attract non-adherents to see the events – public initiation ceremonies, rituals for various stages in life such as marriage, naming ceremonies, funeral ceremonies, etc. The essence of this is that the mass media must act as advertising and marketing agents for these faiths. Publicity should, therefore, be the aim of such synergy between the media and indigenous faiths.

#### **Challenges of using media to Foster Indigenous Faith Tourism.**

As has been noted, the utilization of the mass media to foster indigenous faith tourism is not being explored. This is due to certain factors which militate against such a move. Gedecho (2014) has enumerated the challenges of religious tourism in Ethiopia. Some of these challenges can be seen in Nigeria. These include poor performance in marketing, low level of government involvement, safety and security issues, and others. These are quite prominent in Nigeria. It was stated earlier that the mass media should help market indigenous faiths for the purpose of tourism. But because of lack of media involvement in the sector there is no adequate marketing. This continues to be a hindrance to the development of the sector. One could imagine if the followers of the various African religions around the Atlantic world were encouraged to visit the original homelands of their faiths. It would not only generate better mutual understanding, it will also have potential for economic cooperation spinoffs.



The low level of government involvement constitutes a hindrance to media involvement because there is no existing policy that compels the mass media to be part of the development of the sector. Therefore the media confine their focus to mere presentation of their activities from the perspective of entertainment. Thus, festivals like the Osun Oshogbo feature in the media only from the creative perspective without the accompanying religious significance. Even more significantly, the level of ignorance of many government officials about indigenous religions does not bode well for the development of these religions. When government officials are scared, for example, of taking oaths using local indigenous religious symbols, one can see that this is indirectly celebrating the death knell of such faiths.

Another fundamental challenge is the secrecy in which indigenous faiths activities are shrouded. Most indigenous faith activities are not done before public glare like it is in Christianity. Some do not even have written guides like the Holy Bible and the Quoran which have been translated into different languages. So there is an acute lack of awareness as regards indigenous faiths in Nigeria. Lack of awareness is a problem that militates against tourism development generally, as noted by Obioma (Emmanuel – Thankgod, 2015:35)

Again, it is easy adopting foreign religions (especially Christianity and Islam). But adoption of most indigenous faiths is very difficult, because one would have to go through a rigorous initiation process that some people may not complete in a lifetime. It may, therefore, be impossible for the media to purvey the information needed to fully understand indigenous faiths for the purpose of relating to them.

Even then, in some cases, one has to be initiated before being allowed into some inner recesses that have vital information about such faiths. This may be why most of what the media

expose to the public can only be contemplated in entertainment terms. In some cases, cameras are not allowed. So activities cannot be recorded. It is therefore difficult to fully understand indigenous faiths fully.

This is more so when the language of expression is localized to the area of origin of such faith. This acts as a clog, in the sense that what the media would purvey as information may not be enough to generate the appropriate interest needed to develop the tourism potentials of such faiths to the level of attracting tourists who would seek spiritual rebirth or satisfaction through participation in the activities of such faiths.

Another challenge in the use of mass media to foster indigenous faith tourism is the lack of a central authority among the various faiths. Most of these faiths often have different temples that are authorities unto themselves, with no allegiance to any other authority. This is why it is difficult to forge a synergy with the media for the purpose of marketing such faiths.

In some cases, internal squabbles regarding leadership result in disintegration of some faiths or dissipation of energy on unnecessary bickering. The National Council for Ifá religion, for instance, is enmeshed in a leadership tussle in the last two years. So there cannot be any articulated plan to forge a synergy with any corporate media body for the purpose of marketing their activities in such a situation. The Igbe religion, mostly found in the Niger Delta of Nigeria is made up of different little shrines and temples, each with its own authority and not subject to any other leadership. Thus, there are several versions and variations of the same religion with all laying claim to its authenticity. In such a situation of fragmentation there can hardly be anything the media can do for the purpose of tourism, beyond the presentation of their activities in purely cultural, creative and entertainment terms.

To tackle these challenges, the mass media must make a conscious effort to reverse the trend of encrypting indigenous faiths in a web of secrecy. They should be opened up by the media, which must reveal what the faiths are all about. The media must go beyond mere presentation of artistic or cultural activities that are associated with such faiths. The significance of such activities and other secret ones must be exposed to the public or interested persons for better understanding. This would enable intending converts relate to the spiritual essence of such beliefs and related activities. The media must not restrict themselves to focusing on mere entertainment, but it must serve to really educate or enlighten the people on the essence of such faiths' activities.

The media should, thus, design their messages with the aim of marketing such faiths to those who lack information about them, to attract their attention and elicit their interest in them. The media should assist these faiths to evolve a central leadership, through constant exposure of the issues arising within these religious organizations so that they can embrace best practices found in other aspects of life, and by so doing making them understand the advantages of a central authority which would liaise with the media for the development of their faith.

### **Conclusion**

It is clear from the foregoing that the indigenous faith tourism sector is an area that should be explored and utilized for local, regional and national development. The sector has, all the while, not been considered as worthy of developing, largely because of the vilification it has suffered from the imported religions of the Arabian Desert. This is partly because indigenous religions have not received proper valorization, compared to Christianity and Islam, and even more critically its economic value has not been appreciated because the Nigerian and African economies have focused only on petroleum and other natural minerals as the sole sources of

income for the different governments. But with the drastic fall in the price of oil and other commodities from 2015 to early 2016, the Federal Government of Nigeria and other African governments have started to consider other areas to generate the funds needed for infrastructural development, as well as improvement of their national economies. The indigenous faith sector is one such area hereby suggested for exploitation in this regard. However, this will take a relatively long time to actualize, since packaging and marketing has to be done to attract tourists to both sites and activities of such faiths. This invariably depends on the emphasis by the governments as well as adherents of such faiths who must be prepared to encourage the exposition of such faiths, rather than making them more obscure and esoteric.

It is clear too that the mass media have not done much towards promoting indigenous faith tourism, due to some challenges which have conspired to scuttle any effort towards synergizing with indigenous faiths for the purpose of developing their tourism potentials. This suggested synergy may be long in coming, because of the enormity of these challenges, but if no effort is made to begin the process of rejuvenating the religious traditions, then the synergy may never arrive. It is therefore suggested that these challenges should be first addressed in order for the media to play their role in the development of indigenous faith tourism.

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